

Federal Health Update

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Welcome to Federal Health Update. This newsletter is a compilation of the latest news in the federal health care sector.

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ktheroux@federalhealthcarenews.com

EXECUTIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL NEWS

- **The House and Senate are in recess until Feb. 26, 2018.**
- **On Feb. 21, 2018, the White House announced President Trump has nominated Paul R. Lawrence to be under secretary of Veterans Affairs for Benefits.**

Currently, Lawrence is a vice president at Kaiser Associates. Lawrence graduated from the University of Massachusetts with a B.A. in economics, and has an M.A. and Ph.D. in economics from Virginia Tech.

MILITARY HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **On Feb. 20, 2018, the Air Force chief of staff announced Brig. Gen. Robert I. Miller, who has been selected for the grade of major general has been named director, medical operations and research, Office of the Surgeon General of the Air Force, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Falls Church, Virginia.** Previously, Miller was commander, Air Force Medical Operations Agency, Office of the Surgeon General of the Air Force, Headquarters U.S. Air Force,

Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas.

- **According to Military.com, TRICARE beneficiaries will only be able to change their coverage plans during open enrollment or after within 90 days of a qualifying life event (QLE) beginning in 2018.**

This aligns the military health plan to practices held by most civilian health plans.

Currently, active-duty military families can switch members of their household from one plan to another at any time. Family members of retirees who qualify for TRICARE Prime are also able to switch at any time. However, retirees and their families are often locked into the new plan for a year.

The new rules were ordered by Congress in 2016. The change does not affect TRICARE for Life.

Congress didn't specify what defined as a QLE and according to Military.com, the list developed by the Defense Health Agency did not include pregnancy.

Female TRICARE users often choose to switch plans when they become pregnant to better fit their changed needs. This means pregnant women will be locked into their plans unless their pregnancy happens to correspond with a separate QLE, such as a relocation, or the annual late fall open enrollment period.

This is the DHA's list of QLEs:

[Activating](#)

[Deactivating](#)

[Deploying](#)

[Injured on Active Duty](#)

[Moving](#)

[Separating from Active Duty](#)

[Retiring](#)

[Getting Married](#)

[Getting Divorced](#)

[Having a Baby or Adopting](#)

[Children go to College](#)

[Children Become Adults](#)

[Becoming Medicare-Eligible](#)

[Death in Family](#)

VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWS

- **The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has approved a medical research partnership with DeepMind to address the global issue of patient deterioration during hospital care, which accounts for 11 percent of in-hospital deaths around the world.**

The partnership will focus on analyzing patterns from approximately 700,000 historical, de-personalized health records to develop machine learning algorithms that will accurately identify risk factors for patient deterioration and predict its onset. Initial work will be focused on identifying the most common signs of risk, like acute kidney injury, a problem that can lead to dialysis or death, but is preventable if detected early.

Eventually, similar approaches will be applied to other signs of patient deterioration, leading to improved care for many more patients, with fewer people developing serious infections and conditions — ultimately saving lives.

DeepMind is the world leader in artificial intelligence research. It has already partnered with leading hospitals in the United Kingdom to apply its innovative machine-learning algorithms to research projects looking at eye disease, head and neck cancer, and mammography.

- **On Feb. 16, 2018, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced VA Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Executive Director Peter O'Rourke will serve as VA's permanent chief of staff. He also will continue to serve as OAWP executive director until a successor is named.**

Former Chief of Staff Vivieca Wright Simpson retired on following the release of a VA Inspector General [report](#) implicating her of falsifying records.

GENERAL HEALTH CARE NEWS

- **In direct response to President Trump's October 2017 Executive Order, the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Labor, and the Treasury (the Departments) proposed a rule to expand the availability of short-term, limited-duration health insurance by allowing consumers to buy plans providing coverage for any period of less than 12 months.**

Currently the maximum period of less than three months.

The proposed rule, if finalized, will provide additional options to Americans who cannot afford to pay the costs of soaring healthcare premiums or do not have access to healthcare choices that meet their needs under current law.

Short-term, limited-duration insurance, which is not required to comply with federal requirements for individual health insurance coverage, is designed to provide temporary coverage for individuals transitioning between healthcare policies, such as an individual in between jobs, or a student taking a semester off from school.

A fact sheet on today's proposed rule can be found here:

<https://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2018-Fact-sheets-items/2018-02-20.html>.

The link to the proposed rule can be found here:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/02/21/2018-03208/short-term-limited-duration-insurance>.

- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a Report to Congress on The Management of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) in Children, detailing the impact a TBI can have on children and their families.**

In 2013, there were approximately 640,000 TBI-related emergency department (ED) visits, 18,000 TBI-related hospitalizations, and 1,500 TBI-related deaths among children 14 years of age and younger. The leading causes of TBI-related ED visits, hospitalizations, and deaths for those 0-14 years of age were unintentional falls and being struck by or against an object, whereas for those 15-24 years of age, the leading causes were motor vehicle crashes and falls. Another common cause of TBI is sports and recreational activities which accounted for an estimated 325,000 TBI-related ED visits among children and teens in 2012.

The report identifies gaps in care, outlines opportunities for action to reduce the gaps, and highlights policy strategies to address the short and long-term consequences of a TBI. The report

also highlights:

- TBI management as children transition into adulthood;
- challenges in accessing pediatric specialists to ensure best care;
- research to support management and outcomes; and
- the importance of long-term monitoring of children to better understand adult outcomes and how TBIs at specific developmental periods affect post-TBI outcomes.

Congress directed CDC to compile the Report to Congress (RTC) to review the burden of TBI in children, identify gaps in systems of care, and present recommendations for improving outcomes in this vulnerable population

REPORTS/POLICIES

- **The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine published “Exploring Early Childhood Care and Education Levers to Improve Population Health: Proceedings of a Workshop—in Brief,” on Feb. 22, 2018.** The report focused on the evidence base at the intersection of the early childhood care and education fields; on exploring current and potential effective strategies to work together; and on the policy levers available to improve early childhood development, health and learning.
<http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/reports/2018/exploring-early-childhood-care-and-education-levers-to-improve-population-health-proceedings.aspx>

HILL HEARINGS

- There are no relevant meetings scheduled next week.

LEGISLATION

- There was no legislation introduced this week.

MEETINGS

- HIMSS 2018 Annual Conference will be held on **March 5-9, 2018**, in Las Vegas Nev. <http://www.himssconference.org/>
- 2018 Heroes of Military Medicine Awards Dinner will be held on **May 3, 2018**, in Washington, DC. <http://www.hjfc3.org/heroes-dinner/>
- The 8th Annual Traumatic Brain Injury Conference will be held on **May 16-17, 2018**, in Washington DC. <http://tbiconference.com/home/>

If you need further information on any item in the *Federal Health Update*, please contact Kate Theroux at (703) 447-3257 or by e-mail at katetheroux@federalhealthcarenews.com.